1992-93 to 1996-97, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Dr. Manmohan Singh and others. Now, 'according mid-term review of RBI our GDP growth during the year 1999-2000 may be 6 to 6.5 per cent'. Sir, I would like to go further. Some analysts say that with impressive industrial recovery and the prospects of increased agricultural production, the GDP in 1999-2000 is likely to touch 7 per cent. against the estimated rate of 6 to 6.5 per cent. Sir, I think eminent economists, like Dr. Manmohan Singhji, would appreciate it. India has been, and will be, one of the first ten fast growing economies in the world.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Constitution of a body for Visual Media

*205. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA': Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether a body for Visual Media has been proposed on the lines of Press Council of India (PCI);

(b) if so, what would be its salient features; and

(c) whether it would be provided with enough powers to enforce its decision unlike the PCI?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Export of Tobacco

*206. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether tobacco exports has declined;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures taken to boost export?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) The total quantity and value of

export of tobacco (manufactured and unmanufactured) during the last five years and during the current year 1999-2000 (April to August) *vis-a-vis* corresponding period of previous year are as follows:—

Year	Quantity in Tonnes	Value in Rs. Crores
1994-95	53,731	254.75
1995-96	87,094	446.82
1996-97	116,910	756.77
1997-98	144,697	1070.24
1998-99	91,123	779.11
1999-2000 (Aprl.-Aug.)	60,653	490.14
1998-1999 (Aprl.-Aug.)	42,656	380.34

Exports of tobacco have generally shown an increasing trend except for the year 1998-99. This was mainly due to general recession in the World economy, difficulties in effecting exports to Russia, financial and currency crisis in South East Asian countries, and low prices offered by our competitors due to devaluation in their currencies.

Some of the measures taken to boost export of tobacco, *inter-alia,* include:

(i) Re-orienting production and development strategies to the changing international needs *i.e.*, encouraging production of low tar, low nicotine and light soil tobaccos and discouraging production in undesirable soils,

(ii) enhancing quality and productivity levels,

(iii) monitoring and strict control of pesticide residues,

(iv) aligning grading at farmers level in line with International grading standards,

(v) allowing exports of tobacco to Russia through "Debt Repayment Route",

(vi) export promotion measures like participation in foreign fairs/exhibitions, inviting delegations from foreign countries and undertaking market promotion activities.